



INGREDIENTS TO HEALTHY HOLIDAYS ARE NO SECRET

Many of us look forward to the holiday season as a time for family, friends and fun. All too often, however, we look back on those days as the time we let healthy habits go right out the window. When we get caught up in holiday meals, parties, shopping and other activities, we may neglect the simple things that are important to our wellbeing, such as eating properly, exercising and keeping our stress level down.

It doesn't have to be this way. Having a healthy holiday season isn't really that difficult. It's a matter of being mindful of the things you know are good for you and adapting them to your holiday routine.

WHAT'S YOUR RECIPE FOR HEALTH HOLIDAY EATING?

Huge holiday meals heavy on desserts. All-you-can-eat party platters with lots of sweets. Constant snacking while watching television, on shopping forays or traveling. These and more may make you think the holidays are intended to sabotage your healthy diet. Here are some tips to keep things under control.

- » When you have lots of choices, go for variety instead of quantity. Portion sizes matter. Concentrate on the nutritious, of course, but small samplings of foods you consider treats can be as satisfying as a heaping helping of your favorite dessert.
- » Tamp down your appetite before heading to a feast. If parties or big holiday meals test your ability to resist over-eating, have a little something beforehand. Fresh fruit or a small salad can bolster your resolve.
- » Keep snacking to a minimum. When you do snack, make good choices, such as small servings of popcorn, nuts or veggies.
- » If you're cooking for yourself and guests or deciding what to take for potluck, educate yourself about nutritious holiday meals. You can find good recipes online. Check out the Mayo Clinic's suggestions at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/holiday-recipes/NU00645>, for example.

DON'T TAKE A HOLIDAY FROM EXERCISE

With hosting and entertaining guests, traveling, shopping and other activities, the holidays can play havoc with your exercise routine. But it's possible to work in physical activities no matter how busy your holiday might be. Got a big shopping trip to the mall? Do as much brisk walking as you can while at it. Do you and visiting guests spend time between meals perfecting your couch potato techniques? Get everyone up and moving to burn off calories instead.

DO TAKE A HOLIDAY FROM STRESS

If you have the feeling you've got more things to do than you have time to do them, you're overdue to give yourself a break. Plan for quiet time and for time to do things that relax you. Avoid disrupting your sleep pattern if at all possible.

BE EXTRA RESPONSIBLE WITH ALCOHOL

Even if you're not among those who believe you can't have the holiday spirit without spirits, this time of year will bring more opportunities than usual to consume alcohol. That means you should take even more care than usual. If you drink, do so in moderation. If you drive, don't drink at all. If alcohol is to be served, have a designated driver or take a cab.

None of these common sense steps will dampen your ability to celebrate and have fun. In fact, they'll help keep you safer and healthier, and that's essential to having happy holidays.

(continued)

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